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LETTER DATED 29 OCTOBER 1993 FROM THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I.
OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF YUGOSLAVIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Throughout the last year, the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has on several occasions informed the Security Council and the Sanctions Committee established pursuant to resolution 724 (1991) about the devastating effects of the sanctions on the economy and humanitarian situation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Despite our repeated appeals and documented requests for urgent humanitarian imports of gas and oil for heating purposes as well as authorization of the Council for the defreezing of Yugoslav assets and export of certain commodities through which Yugoslavia could attain the necessary hard currency for the import of urgently needed medicaments and foodstuffs, the Security Council and the Sanctions Committee have not yet responded.

The requests that the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia submitted to the Council and the Committee contained detailed explanations of the priority needs for humanitarian purposes, including methods of verification that would ensure that the humanitarian products would indeed be distributed and consumed exclusively for humanitarian purposes.

In the meantime, the gravity and urgency of the humanitarian situation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has been thoroughly investigated and explained in reports of the United Nations humanitarian agencies. However, owing to the negative position of some of its members, the Security Council and its Sanctions Committee have been unable to respond positively to Yugoslavia's request.

In the latest United Nations inter-agency appeal for the former Yugoslavia, which was announced on 8 October 1993 in Geneva, the High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs. Ogata, and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Eliasson, stressed "that sanctions are clearly complicating efforts to deliver assistance to those in need in certain areas. They are seriously affecting the conditions of life of the most vulnerable groups, in effect creating new humanitarian emergencies. It is important that the application of sanctions generally takes into consideration their direct effects on these groups".

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* Reissued for technical reasons.

The background paper to the United Nations consolidated appeal also underlines that "sanctions compound the plight of the poor in Serbia and Montenegro. Suicides among the elderly, who are no longer able to cope, have increased dramatically. Even basic goods have become high-value, and often unaffordable, commodities in markets increasingly inaccessible to average persons".

In a special chapter of the report, dealing with the impact of sanctions, it is stressed that, according to reports by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the sanctions are having a disastrous impact on the medical and social service system: deaths of infants, alarming changes in pathology patterns, lack of anaesthetics or basic items to treat common diseases and lack of disinfectants. Pensions amount to just a few dollars a month, barely enough to pay for the electricity and water bills. The sanctions have also presented a serious obstruction for the functioning of the humanitarian agencies, imposing, for example, minimal delays of two months to allow supplies to enter. It is further pointed out that shortfalls in life-sustaining food resources exist in all countries of the former Yugoslavia but are the most serious in Serbia and Montenegro.

According to United Nations agencies, it is estimated that up to 50 per cent of the 10.3 million residents of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia are social cases. The health-care system, according to the World Health Organization (WHO) is no longer able to function for lack of most essential drugs, spare parts for medical equipment and medical and laboratory supplies.

In a letter to the Sanctions Committee, dated 27 August 1993, the Director-General of WHO, Mr. Nakajima, pointed out that the current reluctance of the Sanctions Committee to authorize the import of certain raw materials needed for preparation of pharmaceuticals is a problem. Mr. Nakajima offered the services of WHO to verify that such raw materials are used for the intended purposes. He also pointed out the severe shortage of fuel in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as winter approaches. He stressed that a "fresh look" must be given as to how the sanctions are applied to petroleum produces and other fuels used for non-military purposes.

In spite of the alarming reports of the United Nations agencies and appeals by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the Sanctions Committee, because of the stubborn and incomprehensible position of certain of its members, continues to resist any attempt at improving the humanitarian situation and rejects all appeals for the import of gas and oil for heating. Owing to a very complex and slow bureaucratic decision-making procedure within the Sanctions Committee, which you yourself have recently attempted to improve and make more efficient, supplies of essential humanitarian products which are exempt from sanctions have been hampered, with grave consequences.

Proceeding from the highly dramatic humanitarian situation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, in particular with respect to the coming winter, upon instructions of my Government, I call upon you, as the President of the Security Council and the Chairman of the Sanctions Committee, to use your influence and once again draw the attention of the Committee and the Council to the extremely painful conditions that the population of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is

confronted with as a result of the sanctions regime. Should the Committee and the Council fail to reach positive decisions on the Yugoslav humanitarian requests, particularly by authorizing the import of gas and oil for heating purposes as well as expediting the supply of foodstuffs and medicaments, it is certain that the lives of many children, elderly and sick will be lost.

I am convinced that you are aware of this great responsibility before the Sanctions Committee and the Council and that you will do everything in your power to avoid a tragedy.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Dragomir DJOKIC
Chargé d'affaires a.i.